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STATE FOR EAP/CM

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESENTS MONGOLIAN DEFENSE MINISTER
WITH SECRETARY GATES' LETTER ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: SECDEF 241850Z FEB 09

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Covington, Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) On March 2, the first day of GOM operation after the Mongolian Lunar New Year holiday, the Ambassador presented Secretary Gates' letter on Mongolia's prospective redeployment in Afghanistan to Defense Minister Bold (see reftel). The text of the letter is reproduced below in para 17.

12. (C) The Ambassador reiterated our appreciation for Mongolia's contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan and underscored that the USG's comprehensive policy toward both Afghanistan and Pakistan will include diplomatic, military, and foreign assistance components. The Ambassador reviewed the points of the Secretary's letter with Bold and offered to report back to Washington any particulars or preferences the Mongolians may have at this point.

13. (C) Bold noted that Mongolia has sent two site survey teams to visit possible security mission assignments at Polish and German bases in Afghanistan. He also indicated Mongolia would like to send another site survey team to Afghanistan at the earliest opportunity in response to the Secretary's letter. (Note: Although Bold did not specify, our understanding is that this team would investigate what the new site security assignment broadly would involve, regardless of the nationality of the forces under Mongolian protection, and how the Mongolian operation would relate to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. End Note.) Bold stated that sending such a team is necessary to achieve the details needed to inform the political leadership of what the mission would entail. Bold did not provide further information regarding the GOM's preference for providing site security for the Poles, the Germans, or someone else.

14. (C) Regarding the political context, Bold requested that the Ambassador assist him in engaging the Mongolian National Security Council ("NSC," comprising the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker) on the importance of the Mongolian mission. (Note: This would need to occur after the Mongolian site survey team returns from Afghanistan. The NSC, if it agrees, recommends such a mission to Parliament for final approval. End Note.)

15. (SBU) Post sent courtesy copies of Secretary Gates' letter to the offices of President Enkhbayar; Prime Minister Bayar; Speaker Demberel; NSC Executive Secretary Ganbold; and Deputy Director Odonjil of the Americas, Middle East and Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

16. (C) COMMENT: The GOM has once again stated clearly its

interest to return to Afghanistan in line with the two types of missions described in Secretary Gates' letter. However, because the Mongolian decision to do so will be political, Bold must approach both the NSC and Parliament with a specific request for these missions. We will need to coordinate closely with the GOM to achieve their participation. In so doing, we should support Bold's request to send another survey team to Afghanistan to assist the Defense Ministry in preparing its justification for the NSC and Parliament. END COMMENT.

17. (SBU) Begin text of Secretary Gates' letter:

His Excellency Luvsanvandan Bold
Minister of Defense
Ministry of National Defense
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Dear Minister Bold:

Following Mongolia's successful redeployment from Operation Iraqi Freedom, I am pleased to hear that the Government of Mongolia and the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) once again desire to contribute to Coalition operations in Afghanistan. Mongolia's efforts in Iraq and previous support in Afghanistan have been critical to the stabilization and reconstruction of both of these countries. You should take great pride in these contributions.

Ground commanders in Afghanistan have identified two missions for which the MAF can provide valuable assistance. The first of these is an artillery Mobile Training Team (MTT). Previously deployed Mongolian MTTs have performed superbly in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and have provided a critical capability to the Afghan national army. The second request is for an infantry company to conduct a security mission similar to the task the MAF successfully accomplished in Iraq. It is my sincere hope that your government will agree to deploy forces for both of these important purposes.

In order for Mongolia's contributions to be most beneficial to coalition efforts in Afghanistan, I request that the MAF consider the deployment on a continuous, rotational basis ensuring year-round coverage. Through the U.S. Defense Attach's office in Ulaanbaatar, the United States is ready to work with the MAF on initial deployment dates, locations, and other specifics.

The defense relationship between the United States and Mongolia continues to flourish, and I am grateful to Mongolia for its continued commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

//Robert Gates//
(End text of letter.)

MINTON